



## KEYS TO EFFECTIVE HEALTH PROMOTION



### Key #8: Program Evaluation Basics

Program evaluation is critical for effective health promotion and will help you get Command support.

#### Why evaluate?

Program evaluation answers these questions:

- What change(s) occurred in the target population?
- 'What's in it' for the Commander?
- Are the resources that are being used worth the outcomes that are achieved?
- Were program outcomes expected? (Unexpected outcomes may have occurred.)
- What program areas need improvement?

#### FACT OF LIFE:

**Program evaluation left to "chance" or until "there is time" will never happen.**

- Program evaluation should be considered as an essential part of the whole plan for health promotion and not as something extra.

#### Where do you start?

Keep it simple. Program evaluation does not have to be complicated.

#### • Get baseline data.

- Baseline data is the health status of the target population at the beginning of the program.
- Start by collecting just 3 or 4 key items as the baseline. You will have better success collecting follow-up information later if you only need to get a few pieces of data.
- Don't rely *only* on health indicators that require lab evaluation. Also use self-report information and health indicators that are measurable without lab tests.

#### • Collect data that relates to readiness.

- You should always be ready to communicate to leadership the ways that your program impacts readiness. Plan ahead to collect data that will demonstrate this connection.
- Think like a Commander: what program outcomes will be important from a Command point of view?

#### • It's never too late to incorporate program evaluation into health promotion.

- If your program is already up and running and you didn't plan for data collection ahead of time, start collecting data **NOW**.
- If you don't have baseline data, then collect interim data and compare that to end-of-program data.
- Or, you can compare final program outcomes to similar programs elsewhere.

If you can't make any comparisons to other data, use resources like The Community Guide (<http://www.thecommunityguide.org/>) that have already evaluated the effectiveness of health promotion program components. Compare the components of your program to those that have been proven effective elsewhere.